



Charlotte Mason's House of Education,
Scale How, Ambleside, UK, 2009

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BOOKS.

Clay Modelling for Schools, by George S. Haycock. Published by Newmann & Co. This course has been prepared for children from seven to eight years of age. The arrangement of lessons is decidedly good, and the directions given are the clearest and most complete yet published. We do not altogether agree with all Mr. Haycock's suggestions, for instance, "that slates are good substitutes for boards." The coldness of the slate dries the clay too rapidly, and it is as a rule difficult to take up a flat model from it without breakage. Millboard is preferable. Mr. Haycock falls into the general error, practical though he undoubtedly is, of forming stalks in clay. When models dry, they shrink, and the consequence is that the clay stalks fall off, and the child is disappointed with its work. It is wiser to put in a 1 inch stalk from a hedge or tree.

A money-box is not a good model—even clay has its limits—and it is bad art to train the pupils to get the sides of their boxes flat by tapping their clay against the board. We only differ from Mr. Haycock on these few points—and they are indeed few. We can cordially recommend it to mothers and teachers who wish to teach their children clay-modelling.

Aunt Mai's Annual, 3s. 6d. Published by Archibald Constable. This annual will make its first appearance in November, and we trust that Aunt Mai's Nieces and Nephews, to whom it is dedicated, will ask for a copy to put into their own libraries. Many of the favourite tales which have appeared in the *Parents' Review* will be found therein, very beautifully illustrated by Miss Alice Mitchell. The proofs of these are now on my desk, and I can assure my little readers that they will be delighted with them. The cover is in colours, and is also very beautiful. Next month we will review the annual.

William Henry Widgery, Schoolmaster, by W. K. Hill, (Nutt. pp. 281. Price 3s. nett).

The subject of this memoir, though not very widely known outside his own circle, was a man who did genuine service to his generation, and who, wherever the book be read, will do service to the generations to come. He was a schoolmaster at heart and always—a schoolmaster who was also a man. His business was to make the world better through its children, and in or out of school he never forgot it. He believed himself worthy of his hire, as all honest workers must, but he worked for the results, not for the payment. He was, moreover, a reforming schoolmaster, quick to discover abuses and follies, impatient to remedy them and bold to speak all his mind, making many enemies and many friends, enemies who reviled him as a prig, friends who honoured him as a saint. In the love of man rather than the "fear of God" (if they be not at bottom the same), he was righteous in all his ways, and many a crier of "Lord, Lord!" might learn a lesson from his noble life.

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His colleague, Mr Hill, has been well-advised to raise this memorial to his friend. As we read it the man lives again, his voice again rings through the wilderness, his strong faith again kindles our smouldering hopes, and we feel once more that the fight is worth fighting, and that though the time may be long the victory is sure.

Parents, the schoolmaster's best allies, would find much to interest them in Mr. Hill's book. Old-fashioned folk would, we believe, awake to the danger of leaving too much to the schoolmaster; new-fashioned folk, perhaps, to that of leaving too little; and both would find many practical hints for a more effective alliance.

The book, which purports to be "a descriptive and critical account" of Widgery's life, works, and character, falls into three parts. The first contains the pathetic story of his short life, with all its unfulfilled ambitions; the second, a review of his theories of teaching, a description of his methods, and some account of his few published writings; the third, Mr. Hill's estimate of his character.

For further details on all these points we must refer enquirers to the book itself, merely saying here that the cause of making education the foundation of all social progress; the cause of specially training the educator for his delicate task; and the cause of making the English language the chief instrument for educating the English people, have all lost in William Henry Widgery one of their most ardent champions.

J. RUSSELL.

DEAR EDITOR,—In my notes last month I called the attention of your readers to an article by Dr. J. M. Rice, in the *Century* magazine, on the school excursions annually arranged for educational purposes in Germany, and they will do well to read another article by the same author, in the *Forum* for September, which contains an account of an excursion made on similar lines in America in June last, being the first ever attempted there. He tells how a party of 78, (none of whom, excepting a few of the teachers, had ever seen the ocean or a mountain) in seven days travelled some 1,800 miles, and visited many places noted for their natural beauty, or for their historical or political importance. Their programme included such varied items as a session of Congress at Washington, a dip in the sea at Virginia Beach, a visit to a dock-yard, a Government fire-arms factory, a fortress, more than one museum, and the White House. The experiment contrasts unfavourably with the German tour in the excessive distance covered, and the high cost (£6 per head) for the trip, as compared with 2s. 6d. per day in the other case; and there was also much loss through the want of sufficient preparation beforehand. But the amount of valuable information acquired by the pupils in the time cannot be calculated, and should encourage other school-managers to follow the example thus set, especially in this country, where there is no corner that is not historic, and where the necessary variety can be obtained in a much less extended tour.

I have just had an opportunity of examining a charming magazine for children, published in America, called the "Child-Garden." It is full of delightful pictures, songs, music and stories such as children love, most of them conveying in a happy way some lesson of religion, or natural

history, or observation of form or colour. There are also suggestions for games, for drawing, modelling and other nursery arts, and the whole is so artistically produced, and of such sterling value, that it is sure of a welcome everywhere.

The *New Age*, a capital weekly paper, of which the first number lies before me, contains many good things. I must, however, content myself by quoting only one sentence from a report of a sermon by Rev. Mark Guy Pearce,—“You might as well break a bird's wing to teach it to fly, as break a child's will to gain obedience.”

The *Strand* for September contains a comparison between the books now enjoyed by children, and those of a past generation, and one reads with astonishment how low a place is now held by such old favourites as the “Pilgrim's Progress,” “Robinson Crusoe” and the “Arabian Nights.” The writer (Frances H. Low) in conclusion draws attention to the “vulgarity of style and sentiment of many of the books favoured by modern boys. . . . The strain of commonness in humour, the vulgarity of the style, the complete absence of anything imaginative or high or heroic, that can inspire and animate and unconsciously elevate a boy, are so marked that it is a marvel that parents should permit such literature, and their popularity is the severest commentary on the national demoralization of literary feeling.”

I cut from the *Woman at Home* an account of the careful manner in which the Empress of Germany attends to every detail of the education of her boys, working, romping, botanising with them; she, in short, permits nothing to interfere with her personal care of them.

The only article in the principal English monthlies to which I need specially refer is that by Mr. John Rae, in the *Contemporary*, on “The Work of the Beer Money.” This is a most valuable summary of the results of three years' working of the County Councils Technical Educational Scheme, and should be carefully studied.

October 9th, 1894.

PATER JUNIOR.

OUR WORK.

House of Education Natural History Club Notes, by M. L. Hodgson.

—To-day I have, through the kindness of friends, the pleasure of showing you some specimens of *Sarracenia* and *Nepenthes*, and, I trust, that with the help of Prof. Geddes' “Chapters on Pitcher Plants,” I may be able to direct your attention to some of the interesting facts that are known, of the relation between plant and insect life. Many of you are familiar with both the Sundew and the *Pinguicula*, as they are common objects in the bogs and wet places on the mountain sides. The fact of their having considerable power of detaining insects for their own use was shown in a remarkable way when we saw dozens of the small heath butterfly caught and entrapped by them. I may have remarked to you before that the wetting properties of the secretion in the leaves of insectivorous plants aids considerably in detaining large insects. This secretion is called by Tait, *azerin*, and possesses wetting properties similar to those of glycerine and paraffin. Possibly you may have noticed the rapidity with which a drop of paraffin spreads itself over whatever it may happen to fall on. In the same way the *azerin* will rapidly wet the bodies and wings of the creatures that it touches, depriving them of the power of flight, and by stopping up their tracheæ, make breathing either difficult or an impossibility. Tait made experiments by placing living flies in tubes containing distilled water, *Nepenthes* fluid and *azerin*. He found that the flies in the tube containing water only, lived for a long time on the surface of the water, while those in the other tubes rapidly sank to the bottom. This was owing to the rapidity with which the creatures got wet. If you look at the pitchers before you, you will see two distinct forms. A short round kind, with well developed pathways, up which ants, beetles or other small creatures could easily pass. These are formed on young plants, and are associated with young leaves, and are sometimes found resting on the ground. The adult and more abundant form of pitcher is longer and narrower, while the wings are less well developed, or are absent altogether, no longer being required, as winged creatures find an excellent landing stage on the rim of the pitcher. I will not enter into a detailed account of the minute structure of the pitchers, as I only wish now to use them as a text, by which to draw your attention to the way in which plants adapt themselves to the insects they wish to attract, not consciously, though it may often perhaps seem as if it were so. Interesting as we have found these strange insect-traps from a far off land—the *Sarracenia* before you having come from Madagascar, and the *Nepenthes* from places even more remote—with their pitchers half full of “insect-broth,” the plants you see in your daily walk are not less strange and wonderful in the way they have, many of them, adapted themselves to their mode of life. Has it ever occurred to you to wonder why the irregular flowers